

Section Four – Coming Back Home

http://exchanges.state.gov/media/youth/audio/nsli_111309_alumni_4.mp3

Narrator:

Some of the recent NSLI-Y program participants shared their thoughts on the best ways to deal with the inevitable challenges we all face when living and studying in a foreign country.

Esmay Devra West:

Whatever they tell you in the pre-departure meeting, I mean they're only going to be able to tell you generalizations. They told us stuff and what we saw was different and I had some experiences where people were not very happy about talking to be because I was slow or using wrong words and stuff. It's really unnerving to have someone treat you like you're stupid because you don't speak the language. Well, you just have to remember that it's a learning experience. Don't let yourself get down about someone being impatient. They're not the ones going to a foreign country and speaking in a language that's not their first language. So, if they're being mean to you about it, that's just them being rude and you can't let it bother you that much.

Margaret Mullins:

I just got back from a year abroad and I spent half the year in Egypt again and then half the year in Doha, Qatar. I experienced the exact same things. It was my third time in Egypt at this point and even at the end, in December, I was still just getting frustrated with some of the daily things and I think that that's, it just doesn't go away, really. It's a lot of work. I just remember trying to figure out what bus I was trying to get on just to get home and things like that can be just really, really frustrating, but it helped me appreciate Egyptian society; helped me appreciate American society.

Matt Thorp:

Anyone who goes abroad should maintain a positive contact, I mean it might not be their host mother, but just someone who's Russian that they can talk to that only knows Russian. Because then it forces you to communicate, and it was really nice.

Narrator:

Coming back to the United States after an extended time in a foreign country is sometimes as challenging as leaving in the first place.

Matt Petty:

Actually coming back, even though it was only seven weeks, it was challenging for me. They gave information about culture shock whenever we came back that the first couple days with your family and friends it's a novelty, you know, how was Russia and everything, but then they don't ask any more. I had really grown a lot in my views around the world and views on my family especially, just because of how

the Russian culture views possessions, family, pace of life. Now, two months after, you know, I continue talking with the friends I made in Russia through the internet, but you know my family, friends, it's normal again.

Matt Thorp:

Myself, I really didn't have any homesick issues. I mean, it was really coming back, like the reverse culture shock. Some of my friends got a little upset at me for talking about Russia so much so be wary of that. You can go into so many different stories and like talk about the food and all that stuff. But only you're really going to know what that country is like.

Corinne Hoogakker:

Oh, it was completely worth it. I loved it. The people in Tajikistan are so fabulous. You sit down on the bus and you got to talk to whoever's next to you and it's great. Everyone was so welcoming and I kind of worried because Tajikistan is a Muslim country and you know, that's something that a lot of us aren't used to and I was like, oh no, you know, what am I going to have to cover up my hair everyday, and it was the weirdest mix of cultures I could possible imagine and I feel like I got exposed to so much that you would never ever come across here. I really don't know what I want to do, but I know that I want to go abroad a whole lot more.

Narrator:

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